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OPERATIONAL ART: YOUR END STATE IS YOUR START POINT

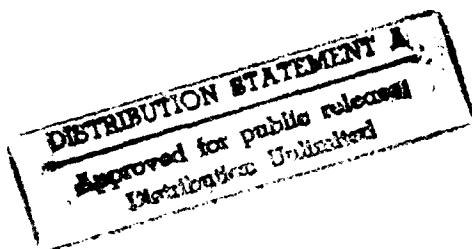
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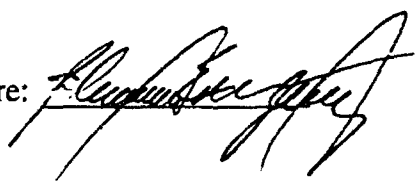
Richard E. MacNealy

Major, U.S. Army

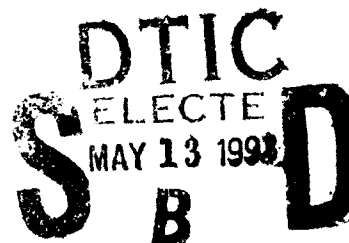
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.



Signature: 

18 June 1993



93-10343



93 5 11 10 9

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No 0704 0188	
1a REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>			1b RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS <b>N/A</b>		
2a SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY <b>N/A</b>			3 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT <b>DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A; APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.</b>		
2b DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE <b>N/A</b>			5 MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
4 PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)					
6a NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION <b>College of Naval Command and Staff</b>		6b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)		7a NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) <b>Naval War College Newport, R.I. 02874</b>		7b ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			
8a NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)		9 PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		10 SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS			
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO		PROJECT NO	
		TASK NO		WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO	
11 TITLE (Include Security Classification) <b>OPERATIONAL ART: YOUR END STATE IS YOUR START POINT (v)</b>					
12 PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) <b>MacNealy, Richard Edward, Major, U.S. Army</b>					
13a TYPE OF REPORT <b>Final</b>		13b TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____		14 DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) <b>1993 June 18</b>	
				15 PAGE COUNT <b>31</b>	
16 SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17 COSATI CODES			18 SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	Operational Art; Historical Examples; Persian Gulf; Goals; Objectives		
19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) Operational Art is important to U.S. military success, but little attention has been paid to what can make a commander successful at this level of war. Military institutions utilize different methods to help structure the process associated with Operational Art, but don't emphasize the first step - a vision of the end state. Military history shows that success at the operational level of war depends on the operational commander's ability to translate strategic goals into a militarily achievable end state. U.S. commanders must focus attention on envisioning the end state and military educational institutions must strengthen courses on the Operational Art by concentrating on the ability to develop an operational end state in order to attain a strategic objective.					
20 DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21 ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		
22a NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL <b>Richard E. MacNealy</b>			22b TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)		22c OFFICE SYMBOL

ABSTRACT of  
OPERATIONAL ART: YOUR END STATE IS YOUR START POINT

Operational Art has been recognized as an important factor in recent U.S. military successes, but little attention has been paid to what can make a commander successful at the operational level of war. Military publications and educational institutions utilize different methods to help structure the mental process associated with Operational Art, but don't emphasize the first step of Operational Art - a vision of the end state. Military history shows that in most circumstances, success at the operational level of war depends on the operational commander's ability to translate strategic goals into a militarily achievable end state. U.S. commanders must focus more attention on envisioning the end state and military educational institutions must strengthen courses on the operational level of war by concentrating on the ability to develop an operational end state in order to attain a strategic objective.

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# OPERATIONAL ART: YOUR END STATE IS YOUR START POINT

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Problem. The United States Military discovered (some say rediscovered) the operational level of war and Operational Art during the last decade or so. The theoretical process associated with Operational Art has been recognized as an important factor to recent U.S. military successes. While there is little doubt as to the importance of Operational Art, relatively little attention has been paid to what can make a commander successful at this level of war.

Although there are numerous objective and subjective elements involved that lead to operational success, even the military genius Clausewitz described needs a place to begin. Military publications and educational institutions utilize a series of questions and/or concepts that help structure the process. For example the Army's FM 100-5

*Operations* uses these:

- ✓ What military condition must be produced in the theater of war or operations to achieve the strategic goal?
- ✓ What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?
- ✓ How should the resources of the forces available be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?

Although valid and useful in a broad sense, they do not focus the appropriate emphasis on the most critical element of Operational Art - the beginning or the *start point*. This paper identifies that start point.

## CHAPTER II

### An Illustration

On the second of August 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. United States political and military leaders reacted quickly to develop strategic options to counter the Iraqi move and protect the world's oil supply. Initially caught unprepared (due to an ongoing reorientation of war plans)', United States Central Command rapidly focused on developing courses of action to stop a potential follow-on invasion of Saudi Arabia. America's highest leaders debated what had to be done, all seemingly oriented on the immediate crisis at hand. Everyone was caught up in the moment. But even in this crisis environment military genius was at work. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait presented an opportunity to reach a strategic goal that few initially grasped.

A telling moment occurred just three days after the invasion. LTG Thomas Kelly (Operations Deputy for the Joint Staff) walked into General Colin Powell's office (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff - CJCS) and initiated the following conversation:

*"What are you thinking about"? and he (Powell) said "I'm thinking about the end game". I said "What do you mean"? He said "Well, you know, we don't want to destroy Iraq, that would create another power vacuum in the Middle East. What we need to do is take him [Saddam Hussein] down to maybe a thousand tanks, a hundred thousand troops - enough to defend themselves from their neighbors, but not enough to project power outside the country".<sup>2</sup>*

LTG Kelly said "...he [Powell] is the only man I know in America who was thinking in those terms on the fifth of August". Powell had met Clausewitz's description of genius: "...quick recognition of a truth that the mind would ordinarily miss or would perceive only after long study and reflection."<sup>3</sup>

Powell's statement, and the thought process that led to it, provides a clear example of the beginning in Operational Art, the start point. Why? Although General Powell was not the operational level commander of *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, his statement dealt directly with the operational level of war. The thought process and resulting vision of the "end game" provided the start point for subsequent events that led to the attainment of U.S. strategic objectives in the Persian Gulf War. It is an example of Clausewitz's "Military Genius" - at the operational level.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE START POINT

*The first step and most important element of Operational Art is the commander's development of his vision of the operational end state.\**

In defending this statement, I will discuss terms, some historical examples, possible counter arguments, and conclude with implications and recommendations for the U.S. in the post cold-war era.

Although it may seem rather obvious, many commanders have come up short in recognizing that when the commander envisions and conveys a clear operational end state to his subordinates (based on strategic objectives) all subsequent actions can orient on and support the attainment of that end state. This culminates in unity of effort. Without this clear vision of what the operational end state is, planning and execution are wasted efforts and the force is comparatively ineffective. The commander's vision of the

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\* "Commander" refers to the commander at the operational level of war in the remainder of this paper.

operational end state follows the most important principle of war: the objective. Marine Corps manual FMFM 1 states "the key to any plan is a clearly defined objective".<sup>4</sup> By recognizing this critical principle of war and applying it to Operational Art, commanders and their staffs can improve both planning for and execution of their mission to achieve strategic objectives. It also gives them a method to gauge success.

## CHAPTER IV

### BASIS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

To establish a basis for the remainder of this paper, I must discuss the operational level of war, Operational Art and their relationship to Strategy and Tactics.

Department of Defense descriptions of the operational level of war and Operational Art are synopsized below.

- *Operational Level of War* - decision/command level which involves deciding when, where, with what forces, and under what conditions to engage (or refuse to engage) the enemy in battle to achieve a strategic objective.
- *Operational Art* - orchestrating military forces in campaigns to achieve a strategic objective.

The operational level of war is the link between strategy and tactics. Operational Art utilizes tactical results to attain strategic objectives. This requires the commander and his staff to think about their task from a unique perspective. It is distinguished from strategic or tactical thinking by its required outcome: the operational commander *must* develop the conditions within his area of responsibility that *lead directly to the successful achievement of a strategic goal*.

Although traditional American principles and concepts of war apply at all levels of

war, the difference between levels is the perspective involved. The operational level commander must think along these three lines of perspective.\*

Goals. The commander's overriding concern must be the strategic goal. He must translate the strategic goal into militarily achievable actions that in turn lead to the attainment of the strategic goal. Commanders must envision what conditions are required in the region for success (operational end state) and must understand how to achieve those conditions.

Environment. The commander requires an appreciation for the physical and political environment (terrain, weather, hydrology, etc.) of the region. Physical environment is critical because it has a direct bearing on choosing the appropriate resources necessary to achieve the strategic goal. The political environment (including cultural and historical factors) is important because war is an act of politics - both enemy and friendly coalition politics. The commander functions where one (politics) transitions to the other (military action/war).

Resources. In order to establish the conditions for success, commanders must recognize what resources (combat, supporting forces and other assets) are needed to achieve the desired end state, bring together those resources at the right time, and orchestrate them in a manner that pits friendly strengths against enemy weaknesses. Inherent in this is knowing when to commit (or not to commit) to combat. In other words, the commander must apply the right force at the right place at the right time.

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\* Adapted from the Army's METT-T - Mission, Enemy, Troops, Terrain and Time.



## CHAPTER V

### CASE STUDY - PERSIAN GULF 1990/1991

Chapter II used Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and initial American response to highlight the critical element of Operational Art - a vision of the end state. Let's delve into the situation in more detail.

American strategy in the Middle East has long included stability as one of its key goals.<sup>5</sup> Instability in the region threatens access to oil, which in turn seriously impacts the world's economy. A variety of U.S. actions in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s attempted to support this strategy. Witness the development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, followed by establishment of Central Command (CENTCOM), as well as U.S. actions during the Iran-Iraq war (Operations *Earnest Will*, *Prime Chance*, etc.).

On 2 August 1990 when Iraq, by far the strongest Moslem military power in the region, invaded Kuwait, the United States' vital interests were threatened. A key strategic issue was how to restore stability to the region.

CENTCOM had operational level plans available, but they were oriented on an attack by the Soviet Union into Iran - not the primary threat by 1990. General Schwarzkopf, U.S. Commander in Chief, Central Command (USCINCENT) was in the process of revising his plans toward a more regional threat and did not have completed, approved off-the-shelf plans available for an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>6</sup> CENTCOM scrambled to develop courses of action (primarily tactical plans) to prevent Iraq from continuing the invasion into Saudi Arabia, but these didn't have an operational link to U.S. Strategic goals. In other words, how could the defense of Saudi Arabia restore

stability to the Persian Gulf region? It couldn't, Iraq had to withdraw from Kuwait, and more.

This is where GEN Powell's identification of his "end game" came in. If Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and still retained its military might, the region would remain unstable through threats from Saddam Hussein. The only way to restore stability to the region was to reduce Iraq's ability to threaten its neighbors, but not so much that it couldn't defend itself. This was the link between tactical actions and strategic goals, the operational key, the start point.

The United States had four clear strategic goals: immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf; and safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad.' Each of these was derived from and supported the restoration of regional stability and protection of Americans. The vision of the operational end state enabled USCINCCENT to apply Operational Art to achieve the end state - and accomplish the four U.S. strategic goals. USCINCCENT and his staff: conceived and executed plans oriented directly on accomplishing strategic goals; identified and attacked enemy centers of gravity; determined when, where and under what conditions to enter battle; and concentrated superior power against enemy weaknesses within the theater. Detailed examples of each of these other aspects of Operational Art can be found in the *Department of Defense's Conduct of the Persian Gulf War* report provided to Congress.

## CHAPTER VI

### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

Although many lessons, sometimes contradictory, can be drawn from any particular war or campaign, I will use a few examples from post World War II military actions which I believe establish a trend. These examples are limited to post WWII actions because global war is not the norm, whereas limited-to-major regional contingencies occur much more frequently. Besides, the same points can be made for military operations in global war as well. The trend developed below supports the criticality task of visualizing the end state as the first step in Operational Art.

The U.S. and Korea - 1950. In June 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea, and with the Cold War looming over the world, the United States (as well as most "free" countries of the world) saw Korea as an extraordinary opportunity to draw the line against Communist aggression.\* On 27 June, the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) desperately appealed to the United States and the United Nations for assistance in saving their country. In response, the U.N. Security Council (with strong U.S. backing) passed a resolution which called for members of the U.N. to "...furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to *repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area*".<sup>9</sup>

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur was the U.S. military commander responsible for Asia (later to become the commander of all U.N. forces in Korea) and saw the invasion as a showdown between the free world and Soviet/Chinese communism,

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\* Italics added here for emphasis

not just North vs. South Korea. U.S. policy was to contain communism worldwide and in Korea the U.S. strategic goal was to save the South Korean government and restore its territorial integrity.

The situation in Korea was desperate and MacArthur's immediate priority was to prevent a total loss of the peninsula. ROK and U.S. forces had to hold out until U.S. reinforcements arrived.

The U.N. resolution was to "...repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area..." and on 13 July, MacArthur described his plan to accomplish that goal: he would "...drive the invaders across the 38th parallel...destroy all their forces and if necessary...occupy all of North Korea".<sup>10</sup> He was the operational level commander and he had envisioned his operational end state: a destroyed North Korean army and U.N. forces controlling all South Korean territory. The next question was how?

From the beginning MacArthur focused on an amphibious landing to cut the North Korean's logistics lines and crush them between the amphibious forces coming east and south from Inchon and forces breaking out to the north from the Pusan perimeter - the famous Inchon landing. MacArthur had the operational ingredients he needed: he had a vision of the operational end state - a decimated North Korean army and restored South Korean territorial integrity - which would accomplish the strategic goal of containing communism; and he had a method of reaching that end state - cutting off the North Korean army from behind (Inchon) and driving any remnants back into North Korea. As MacArthur said "we shall land at Inchon, and I will crush them!"<sup>11</sup> This operational

move succeeded brilliantly. The North Korean army was destroyed and U.N. forces re-established the border along the 38th parallel.

MacArthur was given a strategic objective to achieve - stop communist expansion by saving the South Korean government and restoring its territorial integrity. He took that objective and developed his vision of what the operational end state should be - destruction of the North Korean army and U.N control of all South Korean territory. The Inchon landing was his method of reaching that operational end state. MacArthur's subsequent actions and eventual relief from command do not negate his genius in applying Operational Art. He was able to clearly define what the operational end state had to be to achieve the Strategic objective... he knew where to start.

The U.S. and Vietnam - 1960s. It's been said that the U.S. military never lost a major battle in Vietnam, in fact, some say that "on the battlefield itself, the Army was unbeatable".<sup>12</sup> That may be true, but the U.S. never won a campaign there either, because there weren't any campaigns, just tactical battles. Colonel Harry Summers, in his book *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, asked the question "how could we have done so well in tactics but failed so miserably in strategy?"<sup>13</sup> My answer: because the United States fought the war in Vietnam in an operational vacuum.

America had the same policy goal during the Vietnam years as it had since the late 1940s: contain communism. The Strategic goal (although not specifically identified as such) in Southeast Asia was to keep South Vietnam viable as an independent, pro-western country. But the method of attaining that goal was never determined. For example, in 1966 General Maxwell Taylor stated that the U.S. was not trying to "defeat" the North Vietnamese, only "cause them to mend their ways".<sup>14</sup> In fact, most of the general

officers who commanded in Vietnam "...were uncertain of its objectives."<sup>15</sup> The official objective, as General Westmoreland, the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) describes it, was:

"To assist the Government of Vietnam and its armed forces to defeat externally directed and supported communist subversion and aggression and attain an independent South Vietnam functioning in a secure environment."<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, the U.S. military effort during the Vietnam war was not organized or backed in a manner which supported this objective. The war was fought as a sideshow to President Johnson's domestic agenda, the military Chain of Command was cowed by aggressive civilian political appointees, and the National Command Authority placed severe restrictions on MACV's conduct of the war.

General Westmoreland, the closest thing to an operational level commander the U.S. had in Vietnam, only controlled U.S. forces within South Vietnam. He had little or no control over other forces in the Pacific theater which were involved in the war, these belonged to the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command in Hawaii. This created a strategic and operational weakness, instead of ensuring unity of effort, it ensured disunity of effort. Even so, Westmoreland never envisioned what the operational end state had to be to attain the goal of an independent South Vietnam. This resulted in many individual battles, but no operational campaigns, because the battles were not orchestrated to attain the strategic goal.

Westmoreland cannot be faulted entirely. U.S. military doctrine had discounted Operational Art and Pentagon civilians "managed" the war with operating restrictions like limiting U.S. forces to operations within South Vietnam's borders. Westmoreland was just a link in the chain.

"The U.S. military strategy employed in Vietnam, *dictated by political decisions*, was essentially that of a war of attrition."<sup>17</sup> If U.S. forces in South Vietnam could attrit infiltrating North Vietnamese forces faster than they could be replaced, the U.S. strategic objective could be attained, eventually. This, by default, became General Westmoreland's military goal. But, attrition alone is not compatible with Operational Art - it can only be called tactics on an extended scale.

A combination of factors led to the "non-victory" for the U.S. in Southeast Asia. In the context of this paper, the lack of a vision of the operational end state was one of the more critical factors leading to the failure. Neither General Westmoreland nor his superiors in Hawaii or Washington ever successfully tied the Strategic goal of an independent South Vietnam to tactical actions in Southeast Asia, they never identified the start point. This operational vacuum resulted in a continual reassessment of what U.S. objectives were in Vietnam, eventually to the point that the U.S. populace grew weary of what they perceived as an open-ended war, lacking militarily achievable goals. They were right. Was there a militarily attainable strategic goal in Vietnam? If not, senior U.S. military leaders failed the American people and American troops by not demanding one.

Israel and Lebanon - 1982. In 1970, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was threatening to take over Jordan. Assassinations and civil revolts were linked to the PLO and by September of that year (known as Black September) Jordan's King Hussein had had enough. He launched his army against the PLO and drove them out. Most ended up in southern Lebanon, with Syrian backing. By the early 1980s a variety of

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\* Italics added here for emphasis.

religious and political factions, including the PLO, had carved Lebanon into pieces and were policing their "territory" with private armies. A central Lebanese government existed in name only. The PLO was well armed and was harassing Israel by conducting terrorist attacks and firing artillery at Jewish settlements near the Lebanese/Israeli border. The Israelis, in an attempt to stop these actions, attacked into Lebanon to destroy the PLO and root out its infrastructure. It was called operation "*Peace for Galilee*".<sup>18</sup>

Israel's national policy is to survive as a country by protecting its citizens and territorial integrity. PLO actions in southern Lebanon were a direct threat to this policy. To stop the threat, senior Israeli politicians approved what they understood to be a limited tactical plan. Israeli Defense forces would strike the PLO as hard as possible, but avoid combat with Syrian forces in Lebanon - more of a tactical raid than an operational campaign. The plan called for Israeli forces to go no further than 40 miles into Lebanon and clear out a security zone free of the PLO.<sup>19</sup> This would have left the PLO in other parts of Lebanon untouched, but significantly weakened. But, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and some of the military leaders appear to have had more ambitious ideas. They wanted to destroy all the PLO in Lebanon by driving all the way to Beirut and destroy the Syrian forces in Lebanon as well.<sup>20</sup> There is controversy as to what the civilian leaders intended and what the military executed, but the end result provides a good example of the starting point of Operational Art.

The Israelis attacked on 6 June 1982. The strategic goal for the operation was the security of Israeli citizens and territory. Defense Minister Sharon and others envisioned the operational end state: a treaty with a friendly Lebanese government to secure Israel's northern border. They intended to attain this goal by destroying the PLO's military



capability throughout Lebanon, remove Syrian forces from Lebanon, and help sustain or establish a friendly government in Lebanon.<sup>21</sup>

The operation succeeded militarily. Defense Minister Sharon and the generals had identified a military end state which would attain Israel's strategic goal of securing its northern border - support of a friendly government in Lebanon, the destruction of the PLO in Lebanon and the removal of the Syrian Army which supported them. They had identified the start point for their operational plan and succeeded in attaining the strategic goal - security of the border.

The U.S. and Lebanon - 1982-1984. The U.S got involved in Lebanon in 1982 due to the Israeli invasion (see above). The Israelis trapped a large contingent of the PLO in Beirut. Many Americans lived in Lebanon, especially in Beirut, and the Navy and Marines were ordered to conduct a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) to remove them to safety. On 24 June 1982, they began the operation.<sup>22</sup> The NEO was accomplished successfully and the Marines eventually departed the area.

On 14 September 1982, Lebanon's President-Elect was assassinated, and two days later Moslems were massacred in two large Palestinian refugee camps.<sup>23</sup> The Israeli Army remained in Lebanon and the political situation steadily grew worse. The Marines were ordered back into Lebanon as part of a multi-national force with the mission of providing "...a presence in Beirut, that would in turn help establish the stability necessary for the Lebanese government to regain control of their capital".<sup>24</sup> President Reagan described the Marines as an "interposition force" to separate the Lebanese government's forces from the feuding militias, the Syrians, and the Israelis. The situation did not appear overly threatening.<sup>25</sup>

On 29 September, the Marines landed again. They occupied their assigned sector, conducted patrols, provided humanitarian assistance (to show "presence"), and eventually began training the Lebanese Armed forces (LAF). Although there was an established chain of command, no one was identified as the person responsible to achieve the strategic objective, which was not clearly identified. Without a specific strategic objective, there wasn't an operational level commander and thus, there was no operational end state! The commander of the 32d Marine Amphibious Unit\* or MAU, COL Mead, decided his mission of "presence" meant providing military assistance to a government which was unable to protect foreign citizens and property.<sup>26</sup> It appears that COL Mead and his successors, for lack of better guidance or leadership, became the closest thing to U.S. operational level commanders in Lebanon - by default.

Five months later, the Israelis were still in Lebanon, occupying territory adjoining the Marine sector. Various armed political factions in Lebanon had or were choosing sides. The Marines, considering their restrictive rules of engagement and the lack of a clear objective, perceived that the best method of carrying out their "presence" mission was to remain neutral. Throughout this period, diplomatic efforts continued in an attempt to get Israeli, Syrian and remaining PLO forces out of Lebanon, but got nowhere.<sup>27</sup>

Fighting soon broke out among the various Lebanese factions, spilling over into Beirut and involving the LAF. Lebanon, with outside agitation, was now engaged in a civil war and the Marines, by association with the LAF, were being dragged in. In early summer, artillery and small arms rounds began landing inside the Marine's perimeter, obviously directed at the U.S. forces.<sup>28</sup> The Marines began firing back. Their attempt

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\* Later relieved by the 24th MAU.

to remain neutral had obviously failed. This fundamentally changed the Marine's mission and the way they were viewed by the warring factions. They were now seen as the enemy.

On 22 October 1983, a terrorist driving a van laden with explosives (equivalent to 12,000 pounds of TNT), detonated it at the Marine's headquarters building, killing 239 Americans.<sup>29</sup> As a result of the bombing, an independent commission (the Long Commission) investigated not only the bombing incident, but the entire Marine operation in Lebanon. Their 20 December 1983 report stated (in part):

"...the so called 'presence' mission was not interpreted the same way by all levels of command. Decisions affecting the role of the MAUs were taken without clear understanding that the conditions under which the Marines first deployed to Lebanon had changed; that the nature of the American involvement had changed.... The commission then recommended a re-examination of alternative means of achieving American objectives in Lebanon."<sup>30</sup>

The American public's skepticism had been increasing all along and the report added serious questions about U.S. involvement in Lebanon.

The situation in Beirut continued to deteriorate. Finally, with no solution in sight and lacking public support, President Reagan decided to pull the Marines out. On 26 February 1984, the last of the Marines departed Lebanon.\*

The tragedy in Lebanon resulted from a variety of factors. One of the more important reasons was that there was no vision of the operational end state. No one knew what the real strategic goal was, therefore, no one could gauge how well or poorly the mission was proceeding. If there had been an operational commander, he could have forced the issue of identifying a strategic goal or at least have been able to provide focus

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\* Other than the Embassy guards and some Army Special Forces trainers.

to his subordinate's efforts. The result of not recognizing the need for an operational start point cost 262 American lives and reflected an impotence in American military thought at the time."

U.S. and Panama - 1989. Panama (the Panama Canal) has been strategically important to the United States since before Teddy Roosevelt. Although U.S. - Panamanian relations have not always been ideal, Panama's leader, Manuel Noriega, caused them to reach the point of U.S. military intervention.

In the late 1980s, Noriega's drug cartel connections, his administration's corruption, and his erratic behavior made him a pariah among most political leaders in the Western Hemisphere. But, in 1989, a sequence of serious events led President Bush to act: Noriega voided the legal election of a new Panamanian President and Vice President; declared himself maximum ruler for life; allowed his supporters to physically assault his opposition on worldwide TV; declared Panama in a state of war with the United States; and began harassing U.S. citizens, resulting in the death of a military officer.

President Bush's goals in Panama were clear: "protection of U.S. citizens and interests [including the Panama Canal], and installation of a friendly, democratic government [already elected, but not in power]."<sup>32</sup> As the decision to use military force grew more likely, LTG Stiner, Commander of XVIII Corps was made the Joint Task Force commander - the operational commander. Although there were plans on the shelf, LTG Stiner put his staff to work rewriting them. He had been given broad strategic objectives and his first step was to envision the operational end state which would achieve those objectives. It was obvious that the removal of Manuel Noriega from power would

not be enough. Noriega had purged his defense force of officers with professional tendencies who could reform the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) and most of the potential successors remaining were at least as bad as Noriega." Stiner and his staff quickly identified the PDF as Noriega's "center of gravity". LTG Stiner then determined that the operational end state had to be the capture of Noriega and the destruction of the PDF. Next came the operational plan to reach that end state.

LTG Stiner decided to attack at night with overwhelming force, in the hopes of shocking the PDF into surrender. By striking directly at the PDF and any support structure they had, such as command and control, logistic support, etc., LTG Stiner intended to remove the only real power Noriega had. When the National Command Authority (NCA) authorized the execution of Operation *Just Cause* the execution order was specific in identifying the strategic objectives:

"To ensure: continuing freedom of transit through the Panama Canal, freedom from PDF abuse and harassment, freedom to exercise US treaty rights and responsibilities, the removal of Noriega from power in Panama, the removal of Noriega's cronies and accomplices from office, the creation of a PDF responsive to and supportive of an emergent democratic government in Panama, and a freely elected GOP [Government of Panama] which is allowed to govern."<sup>34</sup>

Just Cause was a success. LTG Stiner started with a vision of the operational end state - the capture of Noriega and the destruction of his PDF. This early identification of the start point brought unity of effort to a complex, joint operation. It also resulted in attainment of the strategic objectives and was a critical element in the success of the entire operation.

Trends from Historical Examples. The examples above illustrate how important it is for the operational commander to define the required operational end state as his first

step. In those military actions that had a clear vision of the necessary operational end state, subsequent efforts had focus and the strategic objective was attained. In those military actions that did not begin with a clear operational end state, the result was generally failure.

Of course, common sense tells us that just because a commander establishes a clear vision of what the end state must be, that alone does not ensure success. There are other elements of national military power that should be brought to bear in any conflict, for without a coordinated effort, military action alone is unsound. Common sense also tells us that even without a clear vision of the operational end state, an objective can be attained, under exceptional circumstances.

Another important element in the examples above is the strategic objective provided by national leaders. When these are clearly defined, the commander is in a much better position to identify the operational end state he must achieve. When the strategic objectives are not provided or are ambiguous, the commander is left to discover them himself, often resulting in the wrong or even no end state being identified.

Although these other factors are also important to military success, a vision of the end state is the most critical, for if all else is equal, the commander who lacks a vision of the end state will surely lead his force to failure.

## CHAPTER VII

### COUNTER ARGUMENTS

There is a large volume of material available on the art of war, campaigns, battles, leadership, military technology, etc.. This material provides many potential counter

arguments against my statement that the first step and most important element of Operational Art is the commander's development of his vision of the operational end state. In this chapter, I will deal with the ones that have the most relevance at the operational level of war.

Concept of the operation. In a 1988 article, General William DePuy codified what many others believe. He contends that the "concept of operation is the supreme contribution of the commander to his command and to success".<sup>35</sup> He goes on to say that "...the commander's concept of operation is the start point...".<sup>36</sup> I agree that a good concept of operation is important for success, I disagree that it is the supreme contribution and/or that it is the start point. A concept of operation has to be based on a goal or what would be the point of the operation? That goal is the operational end state. Therefore, you have to have a vision of what the end state must be to develop a concept of operation to attain it.

Logistics. It has been said that amateurs think in terms of tactics, but professionals think in terms of logistics. Good logistical support is an important factor in any successful military operation and lack of logistical support has caused operations to fail. But logistics are not the most fundamental element of Operational Art. Good logistical support is essential, but it is wasted effort if the strategic goal is not attained, which requires a vision of the operational end state.

Personnel, training, leadership. These three elements have been identified as some of the most important factors in U.S. military success during the last decade. A well used cliché says that the best plans can result in failure if executed poorly, while a poor plan can yield success if executed well. Indeed, some argue that without excellence in

personnel, training and leadership, military operations will fail. Obviously, they are important to military success, for without excellence in each of these areas, the "fog of war" would rapidly overcome almost any military force. But, no matter how exceptional, they must have a plan to execute, and the plan is derived from a vision of the end state.

Technology. Technology is another important element in warfare. Many would argue that high tech weaponry provides an overwhelming advantage to the military force that has it. This was argued most recently after the Persian Gulf war and is a Department of Defense lesson learned. But, it is not *the* critical factor. The Iraqis had high tech weaponry, but they failed to use it in a way that maximized its effectiveness. A contrasting example is Afghanistan. The Soviet Union used its high tech equipment fighting the Mujahideen "freedom fighters", who were using comparatively obsolete weapons, yet the Mujahideen were ultimately victorious. The same thing happened to the U.S. in Vietnam. Weapons, no matter how technologically superior, are only as effective as the plan for their use allows them to be. Once again, the commander's vision of the end state (which results in the operational plan) comes into play.

There are undoubtedly more counter arguments, like the importance of attacking centers of gravity, intelligence, and others. But I can ask of all of them: does the counter argument generate all other actions leading to the attainment of the strategic goal? If it doesn't, my thesis remains valid.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Clausewitz said "no one starts a war - or rather no one in his senses ought to do so - without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."<sup>37</sup> His statement referred to national leadership, but slightly modified, it is just as applicable at the operational level of war: no commander should commit his forces to combat without first being clear in his mind what he must achieve as his end state.

In the "new world order" the United States helped establish, instability is the greatest threat. The enemy is hard to identify, if there is indeed an enemy at all. The U.S. is faced with tremendous pressure to intervene in trouble spots around the world. Without the Soviet Union as an antagonist, it is tempting (and may seem easy) for our political leaders to try to solve problems using the military as the solution. But, what will our strategic goals be? It is critical for us to know if we are called upon!

As our own military history shows us (Vietnam and Lebanon), we cannot realistically expect success unless we are given a clear strategic objective which the operational commander can translate into a military end state (as in Panama and the Persian Gulf). If a clear strategic goal is not provided, the commander is professionally bound to demand it. If he doesn't, Americans will die for the mistake.

Based on the critical nature of envisioning the end state, senior U.S. combat officers must become well versed in analyzing strategic goals and developing a vision of military end state necessary to attain the strategic goal. They must also understand their responsibility to ask for - even demand - a clear statement of the strategic goals they are

required to attain. This education can be accomplished through war games, exercises, and educational institutions.

Although Current instruction in military educational institutions teaches about the operational level of war and identifies aspects of Operational Art, but this is not enough. These courses must be strengthened so that future combat leaders gain a greater appreciation of the importance of having a vision of the end state. The concentration must be on how to translate strategic goals into militarily achievable end states. This emphasis is imperative because it is the starting point for success in Operational Art and success in war.

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